



**EuroHPC**  
Joint Undertaking



## Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

### Call for proposals

Support Centre for HPC-powered Artificial Intelligence (AI)  
Applications (DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03)

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**EuroHPC**  
Joint Undertaking

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field **Support Centre for HPC-powered Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications** under the **Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (Digital Europe Regulation [2021/694](#)<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023 Work Programme<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC JU)**.

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03-01: Support Centre for HPC-powered Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications**

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, outcomes, and deliverables, KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables, targeted stakeholders, type of action and funding rate and specific topic conditions (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme (OJ L 166, 11.5.2021, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2023)1862 of 24.03.2023 on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2023 - 2024 and amending the Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 7914 on the adoption of the multiannual work programme for 2021-2022.

- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

## 1. Background

Large-scale artificial intelligence (AI) models<sup>3</sup> such as Large Language Models (LLMs) or their multimodal extensions are capable of processing information and generating content with remarkable complexity. Once trained with a sufficiently large data set, these models offer great potential to transform science and industry in unprecedented ways due to their unique ability to boost research and stimulate innovation across a multitude of sectors. In line with its mission<sup>4</sup> and strategic programme<sup>5</sup>, the EuroHPC JU addresses the uptake of HPC in the AI technology stack.

From a technical perspective, training large-scale AI models and performing inference tasks demand substantial computational power using specialized microprocessors to address the complexity and scale of these models, which is related to the large number of parameters (typically hundreds of billions) and the size of the dataset used in the training step. Costs for training one large-scale AI model such as the model underlying the ChatGPT application can reach up to 100M€.

High performance computing (HPC) is required to train and deploy large-scale AI models and plays a pivotal role as an enabler for large-scale AI model technologies. HPC systems, including EuroHPC supercomputers, have been successfully used to train and run large-scale AI models in various fields, ranging from Natural Language Processing (NLP), across astrophysics, cosmic theory, high-energy physics, climate modeling, engineering design and optimization, financial sector to biology, medicine, and biotechnology.

However, despite the available of significant supercomputing infrastructure in Europe, significant barriers remain and limit the wider adoption and full exploitation of the potential of large-scale AI models in science, industry, and public services.

Several key factors contribute to this:

- i. HPC and AI communities have traditionally had little overlap. AI users and developers are often not familiar with traditional supercomputing environments.
- ii. Using HPC systems is complex and can vary significantly from one system to another depending on the underlying hardware and overall system configuration, operating system, run-time environments, run-time profilers and software development toolchains.
- iii. Leveraging HPC for AI workflows requires specific expertise. In particular, scaling up AI workloads to exploit the full potential of distributed HPC hardware represents an important barrier for less experienced users.

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<sup>3</sup> Large-scale AI models refer to models that surpass the capabilities of conventional computing systems, both in terms of training and deployment.

<sup>4</sup>Council Regulation (EU) 2021/1173 of 13 July 2021 on establishing the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking and repealing Regulation (EU) 2018/1488, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1173/oj>

<sup>5</sup>EuroHPC JU Decision No 08/2023, [https://eurohpc-ju.europa.eu/system/files/2023-06/Decision%2008\\_2023\\_%20Amendment%20MASP%202021-2027\\_0.pdf](https://eurohpc-ju.europa.eu/system/files/2023-06/Decision%2008_2023_%20Amendment%20MASP%202021-2027_0.pdf)

- iv. AI communities often lack sufficient knowledge on available HPC infrastructure, suitable system architectures, access modes and requirements.

In order to overcome critical barriers for the adoption of HPC in AI, the present action will establish an operational AI Support center (AISC) to provide services for AI communities, enabling AI users and developers to benefit from recent investments in a federated European supercomputing infrastructure and ecosystem.

## **2. Objectives — Scope — Outcomes and deliverables — KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables — Targeted stakeholders — Type of action and funding rate — specific topic conditions**

### **DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03-01 – Support Centre for HPC-powered Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications**

#### Objectives

Central objective of the AISC is the transfer of advanced HPC-AI knowledge to the European AI user and developer communities. As a single access point to the most advanced European competences for large-scale AI model development and training, the AISC will build on the existing service portfolio available to European communities, for example through digital innovation hubs, National Competence Centres for HPC or other national and European AI initiatives, with direct support for research, development, and innovation in large-scale AI models where domain specific expert knowledge in AI and HPC is required.

The AISC will train and enable European AI communities to benefit from the use of advanced HPC capabilities for large-scale AI models. It will enable users and developers to scale up AI workflows using state of the art supercomputing resources, resulting in the development of complex models with significant impact in Europe such as foundation models for generative AI.

As a European contact point and knowledge hub for large-scale AI technology, the AISC will link with and contribute to other initiatives by providing content for training, education and technical assistance in collaboration with the EuroHPC Academy and Application Support Teams.

#### Scope

The action will operate an AISC to assist European AI user communities to fully leverage the innovation potential of large-scale AI models utilizing supercomputing infrastructures.

The AISC will address scientific, societal and industrial applications and user communities that run world leading AI-based codes or ensembles, providing a series of services in order to support their transition to HPC environments and exploit the current and future EuroHPC supercomputing capabilities and federated environment, as well as increasing the HPC awareness and competence in the relevant communities. Proposals for AISC will proactively engage the AI user communities with HPC stakeholders and exploit existing federated resources around Europe, developing HPC-related competences, widening the use and know-how of HPC in European AI communities.

The AISC will rely on the network of National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing (NCCs), established in the EUROCC and CASTIEL initiatives, to delegate support activities with lower complexity for which the NCC network has sufficient competences. The AISC itself will provide HPC support for large-scale AI technology where it falls beyond the scope or competences of the NCCs. Moreover, through collaboration and by providing specialised training and support, the AISC will empower NCCs to increase their service portfolio towards advanced HPC-AI methods and applications. In order to facilitate an effective coordination of the European support services, the AISC will make a report on the provided services available to the CASTIEL Coordination and Support Action at least every 3 months and on a case-by-case basis whenever necessary.

### *Specific requirements - Services and technical support*

- i. Create and offer a service catalogue on AI using supercomputing resources which is complementary to the service catalogues of existing initiatives such as the NCCs, European Digital Innovation Hubs and national AI support centres.
- ii. Operate a service centre providing a multi level support service with an appropriate issue tracking or ticketing system. The service centre should dispatch requests that fall within the service portfolio of other initiatives (NCCs, EDIHs, ASTs etc.) to the respective contact point(s), coordinate, monitor and support the different contributions to provide the best possible joint response to each service request.
- iii. Establish a quality monitoring and assurance system for the services provided by the AISC as well as collaborative and coordinated services with other support initiatives.
- iv. Collect user feedback/satisfaction on the provided services and establish feedback loops with complementary national and European initiatives.
- v. Provide guidance and technical support for scaling up workloads on supercomputers for efficient training, tuning, and deployment (inference) of large-scale AI models as well as in the associated data management.
- vi. Assign resources and a price list to services in compliance with state aid notification obligations.
- vii. Offer specific advice and support for AI developers and users that require advanced HPC resources as provided by the EuroHPC infrastructure.
- viii. Establish a set of common best practices among users of the AISC services with respect to research data management which should be in line with FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) principles.
- ix. Advise and support AI communities in efficiently using their data sets on HPC infrastructure, in particular at the EuroHPC supercomputers
- x. Guide and assist users in depositing large data sets in existing repositories provided by other European initiatives as well as on the use of tools and instruments needed to reuse or validate the data.
- xi. Implement guidance and technical support services for AI communities to assess the performance and efficiency of existing large-scale AI model training and inference codes and workflows in EuroHPC environments, and to increase their performance to fully exploit the advanced EuroHPC infrastructure capabilities towards exascale performance.
- xii. Guide communities on emerging challenges from regulations on ethical and responsible AI and guidance how to concretely address them in specific cases.
- xiii. In case of a large number of service requests on large-scale HPC-AI activities exceeding the capacity of the AISC, the centre will define and implement – in

agreement with the funding authority – a streamlined process for the selection and acceptance of support requests.

*Specific requirements - Capacity building, outreach and collaboration*

- i. Disseminate and promote the services of the AISC to the European AI communities.
- ii. Support users in efficiently using their data sets on the HPC infrastructure of the participating HPC centres
- iii. Coordinate the reuse and sharing of common data sets, including common data formats, to avoid duplication of large data sets on the same data storage by relying on existing HPC infrastructure and services provided by the HPC centres.
- iv. Reduce barriers for data and AI model sharing, reuse, and collaborative development by providing information and guidance.
- v. Support AI communities with the reuse and sharing of AI models including foundation models and intermediary results, for example in the context of pre-processing, tokenisation and embedding of data.
- vi. Provide information on available solutions for HPC and large-scale AI models, such as software, tools, trained models, data sets, and provide information on relevant training offers by other initiatives if available.
- vii. Provide access to shared and/or free AI models such as foundation models on the HPC systems operated by the HPC centres participating in the action, which can be used as a basis to create specialised large-scale AI models.
- viii. Contribute content for training on HPC for AI in collaboration with other initiatives including projects selected in call DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-ACADEMY-02.
- ix. Offer training that covers the challenges encountered when porting and optimizing AI models and workflows for HPC environments in collaboration with the NCCs supported by EuroHPC JU in the EUROCC and CASTIEL grants and possibly other initiatives.
- x. Complement NCC activities in addressing the skills gap and contribute to developing human capital resources for increased HPC adoption in AI communities by creating and delivering training programs for transitioning large-scale AI model-based applications to HPC environments. The training programs will promote adoption of common methodologies, libraries, and tools and reuse of large-scale AI models.
- xi. Complement the efforts of NCCs with the organization and participation in activities and events fostering synergy between AI and HPC communities with special focus on large-scale AI-model involved AI communities.

The consortium should include HPC centres operating supercomputers which are accessible free of charge for European R&D activities. The supercomputers hosted by the consortium members should provide system architectures that are well suited to run AI workflows at large-scale (e. g. including accelerators with sufficient memory and suitable data storage), for example to train large language models. The relevant system architectures, in particular the specific features relevant for AI, and the availability of an optimized AI software stack should be explained in the proposal. At least 60% of the overall indicative resources should be allocated to services and technical support as defined in the specific requirements. Every partner should contribute at least 10% of the overall personnel resources. Participants must assume leadership for tasks and



responsibility for deliverables commensurate with their respective expertise, role and share of resources.

Proposals should bring together AI and HPC experts to explore and exploit synergies, share knowledge, and foster collaboration. Therefore, proposals should explain, for each partner, which related initiatives already exist within the respective organisation and how the AISC adds specific value. Proposals including partners who participate in related initiatives, e. g. EDIHs or NCCs, must explain how overlaps and double funding will be prevented (e. g. by including mutually exclusive service catalogues) and provide measures that allow the funding authority to regularly monitor the clear separation of the activities.

In order to achieve the objective of closer collaboration of HPC and AI communities, at least 40% of the resources should be allocated to partners which are not HPC centres or directly linked to a national supercomputing centre. These partners should be embedded in the European AI ecosystem with complementary domain specific expertise and outstanding track record in the development of large-scale AI models such as large language models, multimodal models, or AI-enhanced simulations beyond an exclusively academic focus.

Proposals should set out a streamlined organisational structure for the AISC with a well-defined general manager role that will be responsible for the operations of the centre. Participating organisation should align their reporting lines without boundaries and with effective reporting mechanisms to ensure an efficient management of the AISC.

Services should be available exclusively to users and entities that are eligible to access the EuroHPC infrastructure as defined in the Council Regulation 2021/1173 and the EuroHPC Access Policy. The AISC should inform all private entities using support services of the AISC about their notification obligations on state aid. In this regard, the AISC will prepare a common service catalogue for the AISC including a list of corresponding market prices.

The JU considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the JU of up to M€ 5 matched by the Participating States with a similar amount, and a duration of 3 years would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals with another duration or requesting other amounts. Only one proposal will be funded.

### Outcomes and deliverables

The action will result in the following expected outcomes:

- i. Effective support structure which is widely recognized within the relevant user communities building upon the pan-European support networks available through other initiatives, in particular the EUROCC network of NCCs.
- ii. Access to a set of large AI models developed by European communities on European HPC systems.
- iii. Comprehensive training material for AI on supercomputing systems in collaboration with the EuroHPC Academy selected in the call DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-ACADEMY-02.
- iv. Significantly increased HPC awareness and HPC uptake by the European AI communities, in particular start-up companies and SMEs.

- v. A catalogue of quality-tested training data sets for large-scale AI models .
- vi. A catalogue of documented AI models available to users for the development of new or specialised models, at least on the supercomputers operated by the participating HPC centres.
- vii. Documented increased and more effective use of EuroHPC infrastructures for AI.
- viii. Documented successful knowledge transfer resulting in an expanded service portfolio of the network of NCCs including state of the art support services for large-scale AI.

The grant awarded under this topic will have to submit the following additional deliverables:

- i. Technical documentation repository: Comprehensive documentation on best practices and technical guidance for scaling up and migrating AI workflows to supercomputing systems.
- ii. User support documentation repository: A repository of best practices and lessons learned from user support experiences.
- iii. Regularly updated service catalogue, complementary to the service catalogues of NCCs and EDIHs, including required resources and market prices.
- iv. Training programs: Development and delivery of training programs and materials for users as part of the EuroHPC Academy selected in call DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-ACADEMY-02.
- v. Detailed documentation on support services with a clear description of the collaboration and cooperation mechanisms with other initiatives (EUROCC, CASTIEL, EDIHs, etc.), split of responsibilities and communication channels.
- vi. Regular reports on user support requests, delivered services, resulting outcomes and resource consumption (person months) for services at least every 3 months. Support activities of higher complexity should be documented with a data sheet which will be agreed between the selected consortium and the funding authority.
- vii. General project documentation including, but not limited to, user information, application details, objectives and accomplishment of objectives, AI model characteristics, training dataset size, software frameworks and toolchains used in addressing the HPC migration challenge, speedup achieved, HPC system resource utilization (CPU and accelerators), HPC system configuration, etc.
- viii. Strategy for further development of services, identifying areas for improvement and the implementation of specific actions to increase effectiveness and impact of the AISC, collect experience and address new developments in the fields of AI and HPC.
- ix. User satisfaction surveys: regular surveys to measure user satisfaction and identify areas for improvement at least on an annual basis.

*KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables*

KPI on the following information should be collected centrally in a structured format to measure the progress of the AISC:

- i. Number of submitted support requests by type of user and support acceptance/relay/rejection rate
- ii. Average support request processing time (half-yearly)
- iii. Average project duration (yearly)
- iv. Project success rate (yearly)
- v. Average AI model size (e.g., in terms of parameter counts, training dataset size) (half-yearly)
- vi. Average achieved training/inference speedup percentage in view of large-scale AI model type, training dataset size, etc. (yearly)
- vii. Distribution of supported users and developers across EuroHPC environments (yearly)
- viii. Number of SMEs/start-up companies supported
- ix. User satisfaction scores (yearly)
- x. Number of trainings delivered (yearly)

### Targeted stakeholders

Public and private organisations established in the eligible countries and as described in the call..

### Type of action and funding rate

DIGITAL JU Simple Grants — 50% funding rate

 For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

### Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (*see section 6*)
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies depreciation only (*see section 10*)
- For this topic, access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations apply (*see section 10*)
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance\*

- extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects\*

### 3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 5 000 000**.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03-01	<b>EUR 5 000 000</b>

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	28 November 2023
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>27 February 2024 – 17:00:00 CET (Luxembourg)</u>
Evaluation:	March-May <u>2024</u>
Information on evaluation results:	June <u>2024</u>
GA signature:	September <u>2024</u>

### 5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section. Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries, and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
  - detailed budget table/calculator: not applicable
  - CVs of core project team: not applicable
  - activity reports of last year: not applicable
  - **list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (template available in Part B): applicable**
  - ethics issues table: not applicable
  - security issues table: not applicable
  - ownership control declaration: not applicable

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **70 pages** (Part B) for topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-A-01. Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

- For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6. Eligibility

### Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries:
    - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries<sup>\(06\)</sup>](#))

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before

submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc (*see section 13*).

### *Specific cases*

**Natural persons** — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

**International organisations** — International organisations are not eligible, unless they are international organisations of European Interest within the meaning of Article 2 of the Digital Europe Regulation (i.e. international organisations the majority of whose members are Member States or whose headquarters are in a Member State).

**Entities without legal personality** — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>6</sup>.

**EU bodies** — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

**Associations and interest groupings** — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>7</sup>. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

**Countries currently negotiating association agreements** — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

**EU restrictive measures** — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*<sup>8</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>9</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

<sup>6</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>7</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>8</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list, and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>9</sup> Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

### Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted for DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03-01 by:

- a consortium of **a minimum of 3 beneficiaries (not affiliated entities) and maximum of 10 partners** from at least 3 different eligible countries

### Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should consider the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

### Security

Projects involving EU classified information must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a security aspects letter (SAL) which is annexed to the Grant Agreement).

These rules (governed by Decision [2015/444](#)<sup>10</sup> and its implementing rules and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded.
- classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the SAL.
- information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be:
  - created or accessed only on premises with facility security clearing (FSC) from the competent national security authority (NSA), in accordance with the national rules.
  - handled only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA.
  - accessed and handled only by persons with valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and a need-to-know.
- at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continue to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules.
- action tasks involving EU classified information (EUCI) may be subcontracted only with prior written approval from the granting authority and only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)
- disclosure of EUCI to third parties is subject to prior written approval from the

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<sup>10</sup> See Commission Decision 2015/544/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

granting authority.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearing may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess the need for clearing in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that in no circumstances can we sign any grant agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in a consortium has facility security clearing.

Further security recommendations may be added to the Grant Agreement in the form of security deliverables (*e.g. create security advisory group, limit level of detail, use fake scenario, exclude use of classified information, etc*).

Beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third-country security requirements that could affect implementation or put into question the award of the grant (*e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc*). The granting authority must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

## 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

### Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional, or national authorities) or international organisations.
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibilities for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
- prefinancing paid in instalments.
- (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)

or

- propose no prefinancing
- request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).



### Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Implementation' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>11</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>12</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation,

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<sup>11</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>12</sup> Professional misconduct includes violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>13</sup>:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call, and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:


Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

- 1) Proposals focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The *ex aequo* proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Implementation'.
- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall proposal portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between proposals, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

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<sup>13</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

 No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.*

**Grant preparation** will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

## 9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

- **Relevance**
  - Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in section 2
  - Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level
  - Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU\*
  - Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance\*
- **Implementation**
  - Maturity of the project
  - Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources
  - Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work
- **Impact**
  - Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements
  - Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society
  - Extent to which the project addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects \*

*\*May not be applicable to all topics (see specific topic conditions in section 2).*

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	3	5
Implementation	3	5
Impact	3	5
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>

Maximum points: 15 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 10 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

## 10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

### Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration:

- 36 months for topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03-01

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

### Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- additional deliverable on dissemination and exploitation, to be submitted in the first six months of the project

### Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (maximum grant amount):

- EUR 5 000 000 per project for topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-AISC-03-01

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement. This rate depends on the type of action which applies to the topic (*see section 2*). Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

#### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 6*).

*Budget categories for this call:*

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services
- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>14</sup>: Yes

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<sup>14</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

- travel and subsistence unit costs<sup>15</sup>: Yes
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
  - internally invoiced goods and services (costs unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers' costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - kick off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
  - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible

### Reporting and payment arrangements


The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **50%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required)— whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** (with cost reporting through the use of resources report).

**Payment of the balance:** At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (*see art 22*).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

### Prefinancing guarantees

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<sup>15</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation, and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guaranteed amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

### Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

### Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
  - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

### Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- background and list of background: Yes

- protection of results: Yes
- exploitation of results: Yes
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access to results for policy purposes: Yes
- access to results in case of a public emergency: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5)*:

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- dissemination of results: Yes
- additional dissemination obligations: No
- additional communication activities: Yes
- special logo: No

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5)*:

- specific rules for PAC Grants for Procurement: No
- specific rules for Grants for Financial Support: No
- specific rules for blending operations: No

#### Other specificities

n/a

#### Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

 For more information, see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

### **11. How to submit an application**

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

#### **a) create a user account and register your organisation**

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EU Login account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

#### **b) submit the proposal**



Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed, and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

## 12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

### Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to: [info@eurohpc-ju.europa.eu](mailto:info@eurohpc-ju.europa.eu)

Please clearly indicate the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see cover page).

## 13. Important

### IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organizations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).  
Organisations may participate in several proposals.  
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced, or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).



## Annex 1

### Digital Europe types of action

The Digital Europe Programme uses the following actions to implement grants:

#### Simple Grants

**Description:** Simple Grants (SIMPLE) are a flexible type of action used by a large variety of topics and can cover most activities. The consortium will mostly use personnel costs to implement action tasks, activities with third parties (subcontracting, financial support, purchase) are possible but should be limited.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

#### SME Support Actions

**Description:** SME Support Actions (SME) are a type of action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming to support SMEs involved in building up and the deployment of the digital capacities. This type of action can also be used if SMEs need to be in the consortium and make investments to access the digital capacities.

**Funding rate:** 50% except for SMEs where a rate of 75% applies

**Payment model:** pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

#### Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)

**Description:** Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) are a small type of action (a typical amount of 1-2 Mio) with the primary goal to support EU policies. Activities can include coordination between different actors for accompanying measures such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for new infrastructure and may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

**Funding rate:** 100%

**Payment model:** pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

#### Grants for Procurement

**Description:** Grants for Procurement (GP) are a special type of action where the main goal of the action (and thus the majority of the costs) consists of buying goods or services and/or subcontracting tasks. Contrary to the PAC Grants for Procurement (see *below*) there are no specific procurement rules (i.e. usual rules for purchase apply), nor is there a limit to contracting authorities/entities. Personnel costs should be limited in this type of action; they are in general used to manage the grant, coordination between the beneficiaries, preparation of the procurements.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** pre-financing - second pre-financing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

## **PAC Grants for Procurement**

**Description:** PAC Grants for Procurement (PACGP) are a specific type of action for procurement in grant agreements by 'contracting authorities/entities' as defined in the EU Public Procurement Directives (Directives 2014/24/EU , 2014/25/EU and 2009/81/EC) aiming at innovative digital goods and services (i.e. novel technologies on the way to commercialisation but not yet broadly available).

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** pre-financing - second pre-financing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

## **Grants for Financial Support**

**Description:** Grants for Financial Support (GfS) have a particular focus on cascading grants. The majority of the grant will be distributed via financial support to third parties with special provisions in the grant agreement, maximum amounts to third parties, multiple pre-financing and reporting obligations.

Annex 5 of the model grant agreements foresees specific rules for this type of action regarding conflict of interest, the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management as well as the selection procedure and criteria.

In order to assure the co-financing obligation in the programme, the support to third parties should only cover 50% of third-party costs.

**Funding rate:** 100% for the consortium, co-financing of 50% by the supported third party

**Payment model:** pre-financing - second pre-financing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance sub-grants) – payment of the balance

## **Lump Sum Grants**

**Description:** Lump Sum Grants (LS) reimburse a general lump sum for the entire project and the consortium as a whole. The lump sum is fixed ex-ante (at the latest at grant signature). on the basis of a methodology defined by the granting authority (either on the basis of a detailed project budget or other pre-defined parameters). The lump sum will cover all the beneficiaries' direct and indirect costs for the project. The beneficiaries do not need to report actual costs, they just need to claim the lump sum once the work is done. If the action is not properly implemented only part of the lump sum will be paid.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** pre-financing – second (third) pre-financing (as there is no cost reporting) – final payment

## **Framework Partnerships (FPAs) and Specific Grants (SGAs)**

### **FPAs**

**Description:** FPAs establish a long-term cooperation mechanism between the granting authority and the beneficiaries of grants. The FPA specifies the common objectives (action plan) and the procedure for awarding specific grants. The specific grants are awarded via identified beneficiary actions (with or without competition).

**Funding rate:** no funding for FPA

## **SGAs**

**Description:** The SGAs are linked to an FPA and implement the action plan (or part of it). They are awarded via an invitation to submit a proposal (identified beneficiary action). The consortium composition should in principle match (meaning that only entities that are part of the FPA can participate in an SGA), but otherwise the implementation is rather flexible. FPAs and SGAs can have different coordinators; other partners of the FPA are free to participate in an SGA or not. There is no limit to the number of SGAs signed under one FPA.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

## Annex 2

### Eligibility restrictions under Articles 12(5) and (6) and 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation

#### Security restrictions Article 12(5) and (6)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, and if justified for security reasons, topics can exclude the participation of legal entities *established* in a third country or DEP associated country or established in the EU territory but *controlled* by a third country or third country legal entities (including DEP associated countries)<sup>16</sup>.

This restriction is applicable for SO1 (High Performance Computing), SO2 (Artificial Intelligence) and SO3 (Cybersecurity), but at different levels.

- In the case of SO3, the provision is implemented in the strictest way. When activated, only entities established in the EU and controlled from EU MS or EU legal entities will be able to participate — with no exceptions.
- In SO1 and SO2, entities controlled by third countries, or third country legal entities may be able to participate if they comply with certain conditions set up in the Work Programme. To that end, additional rules will be imposed on those legal entities, which need to be followed if they want to participate.

The activation of this article will be making a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

#### Strategic autonomy restrictions Article 18(4)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, calls can limit the participation to entities *established* in the EU, and/or entities established in third countries associated to the programme for EU strategic autonomy reasons<sup>17</sup>.

The application of this article will make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

 For more information, see [Guidance on participation in DEP, HE, EDF and CEF-DIG restricted calls](#).

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<sup>16</sup> See Article 12(5) and (6) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694

<sup>17</sup> See Article 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.